# Control of the budgetary implementation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession

2008/2206(INI) - 16/03/2009

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Rodi KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU (EPP-ED, EL) on control of the budgetary implementation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) in 2007, welcoming the structured dialogue established with the Commission on the implementation of the IPA, and recalling its position in this respect, notably the need to:

- grant all beneficiary countries equal access to the full range of policy tools available under the instrument;
- give adequate priority to the fight against corruption and organised crime;
- pay increased attention to institutional capacity-building, particularly at parliamentary level, development of civil society organisations, measures to promote the principle of tolerance and non-discrimination, human development and regional cooperation in key policy areas.

The committee is pleased by the high implementation rate of IPA commitments in 2007 but regrets that the first IPA programmes were only adopted at the end of 2007 and the actual implementation started only in 2008. It considers that there was satisfactory coherence between the 2007 IPA national Programmes and the EU pre-accession policy, as most of the objectives set out in the Programmes were in line with the priorities identified in the respective Commission Progress Reports.

**Do not undermine the political criteria**: the report notes that the main focus for the candidate countries lies in the implementation of European standards, namely statistical, environmental and fiscal standards. It stresses, however, that the importance of the political criteria, notably democratic governance, respect for human rights, freedom of religion, women's rights, minorities' rights and the rule of law, should not be undermined, since their non-fulfilment can lead to complications and delay in negotiations.

**Assistance should benefit citizens**: MEPs remind the Commission that the Union's legitimacy and capacity to promote reforms can be greatly enhanced if the IPA targets its assistance to areas of direct benefit for the citizens of the candidate and potential candidate countries, particularly in view of the needs and challenges generated by the global financial crisis. They are consequently of the opinion that the IPA should support the efforts by the beneficiary countries to meet the requirements laid down in the roadmap for visa liberalisation, so that the citizens of the Western Balkans can finally enjoy freedom of movement and participate fully in EU programmes and schemes.

**Increasing transparency**: stressing the need for transparent and effective IPA management and control, MEPs expect the Commission to report every year to Parliament and its responsible Committee on Budgetary Control on payments and implementation of IPA funds.

**Horizontal issues**: the report notes that horizontal issues, such as environmental impact assessment, good governance, civil society involvement, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, are not sufficiently present and visible in the 2007 IPA projects. The Commission is called upon to develop, in particular, multi-beneficiary regional or horizontal programmes, notably on the fight against corruption and organised crime, intercultural dialogue and gender equality.

**Combating corruption**: the committee stresses the need to use the IPA to strengthen in all beneficiary countries the fight against corruption and organised crime with a special focus on money laundering, illegal migration and human trafficking. Not all 2007 IPA programmes take corruption sufficiently into

account. Therefore, MEPs suggest that funds should be earmarked for this purpose, and call on the Commission to develop a more coherent strategy in this context.

**Involvement of civil society organisations**: MEPs consider that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the beneficiary countries should be more actively involved in the development and initiation of projects. They point out that future IPA programmes should tackle the systematic donor dependency of the CSOs, and should address the development of some of the CSOs along ethno-political conflict lines (especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo). MEPs expect the new Civil Society Facility to tackle many of the problems with regard to the diversity, complexity, and fragmentation of EU programmes.

**Education and youth employment**: stressing that education and youth have not been adequately addressed, MEPs suggest that the Commission examines the possibility of making greater use of the flexibility provided for in IPA so as to allow funding, where appropriate, of measures related to components III-V through the first two components.

**Cross-border cooperation**: MEPs are concerned that the total 2007 IPA allocations for Component II was only EUR 38.8 million out of a total IPA of EUR 497.2 million (i.e. less than 8 %). Regretting that effective cooperation has been difficult to establish, in practice, MEPs call on the beneficiary countries and the Commission, under this component, to pursue further existing cooperation and to develop new cooperation, in line with the objective of fostering good neighbourly relations and promoting economic integration, especially in the fields of environment, natural and cultural heritage and the fight against corruption and organised crime.

**Women's rights**: the Commission is also called upon to provide pre-accession funds for strengthening women's rights in the Balkans, in particular through women's NGOs and women's organisations.

Lastly, the European Court of Auditors is called upon to submit by the end of 2010 a mid-term special evaluation report on the implementation of the IPA.